



ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG USE HEALTH RISKS AMONG RHODE ISLAND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

*Rhode Island Department of Education
in collaboration with the
Rhode Island Department of Health*

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This summary highlights selected information on alcohol and other drug use behaviors which affect health risks among Rhode Island high school students, based on results of Rhode Island's 1997 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS is an anonymous and voluntary survey conducted in alternate years among randomly selected samples of high school students in each of 46 participating states and territories nationwide. It was developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to monitor health-risk behaviors that contribute to the major causes of mortality, disease, injury and other health and social problems among youth and adults in the United States.

During the spring of 1997 the 84-item multiple choice YRBS was administered to 1,528 randomly selected Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12. With a response rate of 60.0%, results of the survey can be considered representative of all Rhode Island public school students in grades 9 through 12.

For additional information or a more detailed report contact Cynthia Corbridge, RI Department of Education (401) 222-4600 ext. 2106 or Jana Hesser, Ph.D., Office of Health Statistics, RI Department of Health (401) 222-2550.

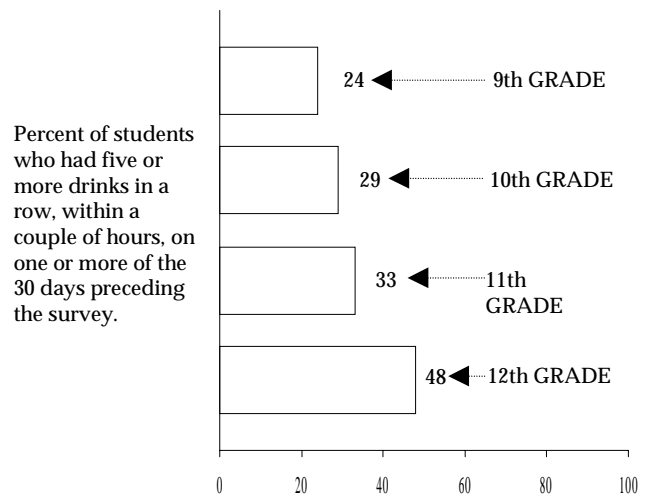
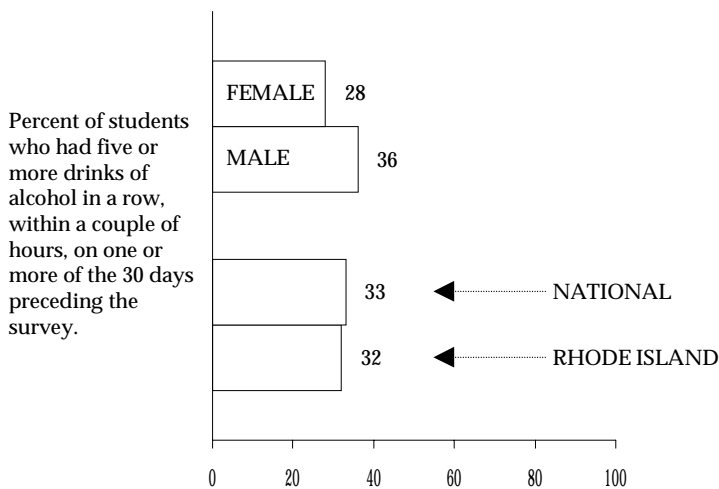
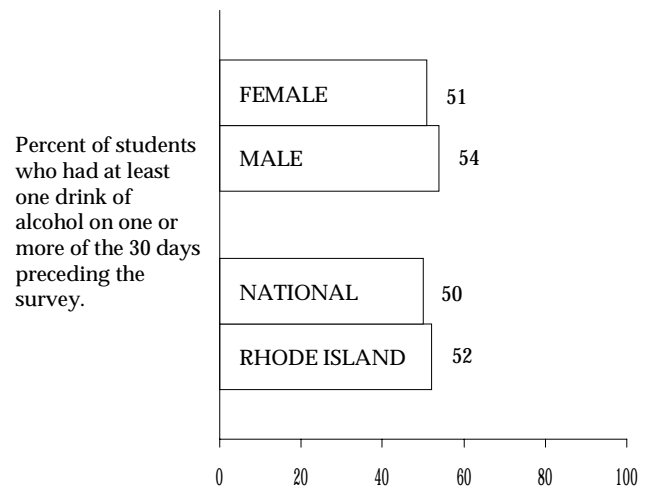
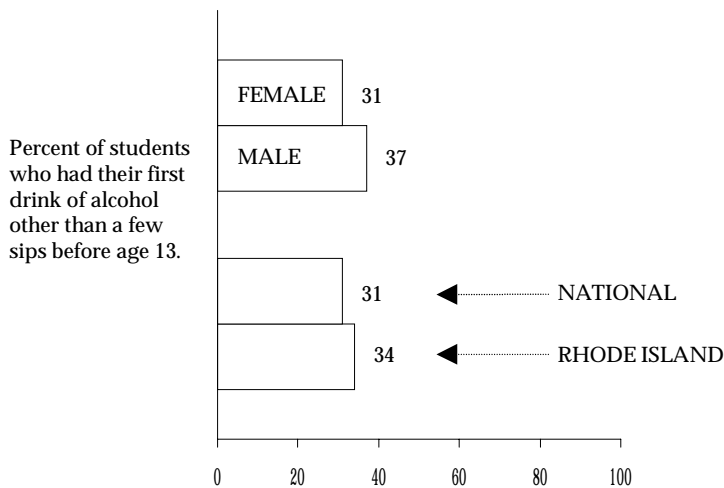
K *KEY FINDINGS*

- ✓ Alcohol use is a major contributing factor in half of all homicides, suicides and motor vehicle crashes, which are the leading causes of death and disability among young people in the United States. 52% of Rhode Island teens had at least one alcoholic drink in the month preceding the survey; 32% had five or more drinks in a row, or within a couple of hours, in the prior month.
- ✓ Early use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana may predict subsequent and more serious involvement with all types of drugs. Use of drugs early in life is associated with other high-risk behaviors such as early sexual intercourse, school dropout, and delinquency. 34% of Rhode Island teens indicated they had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 13, and 11% used marijuana for the first time before the age of 13.
- ✓ "Huffing" or "sniffing" glue, gasoline, the contents of aerosol cans, paint or spray to get high is ranked fourth nationally among all forms of substance abuse by teens. The number of new users, most aged 12 - 17, increased nationally between 1991 and 1997. Most teens and adults are unaware that "huffing" can kill, even the first time. 21% of Rhode Island students had sniffed or inhaled intoxicating substances during their life.
- ✓ Despite drug-free schools certification policies and local regulations regarding alcohol and drug use on school property, a small percentage of students report using alcohol (7%) and/or marijuana (9%) on school property. In addition, 29% of Rhode Island students had someone offer, sell, or give them an illegal drug on school property during the 12 months preceding the survey.

Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Risk Behavior: Alcohol use

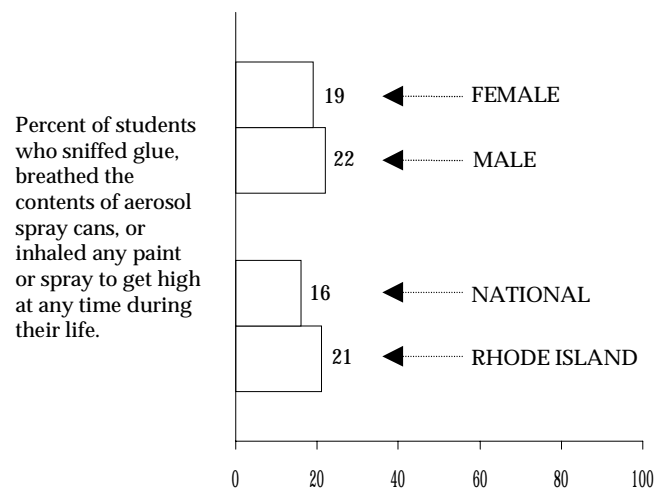
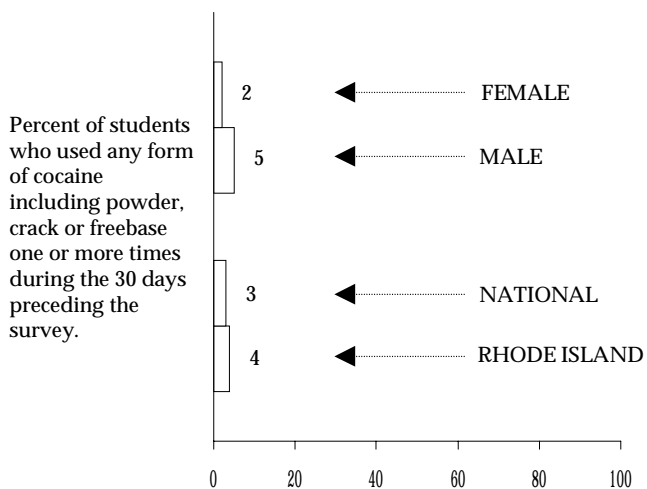
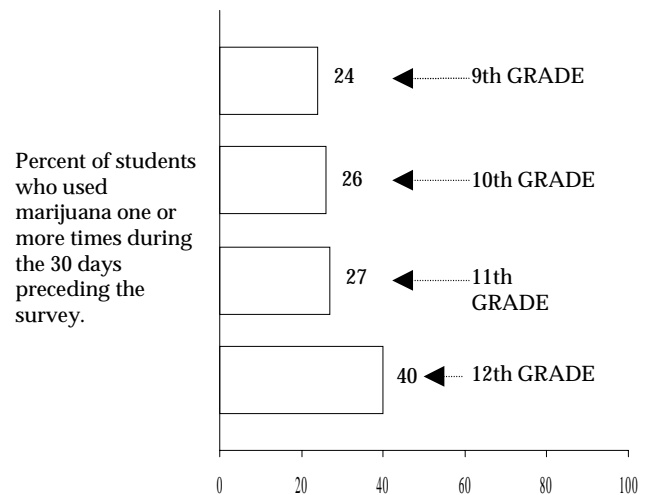
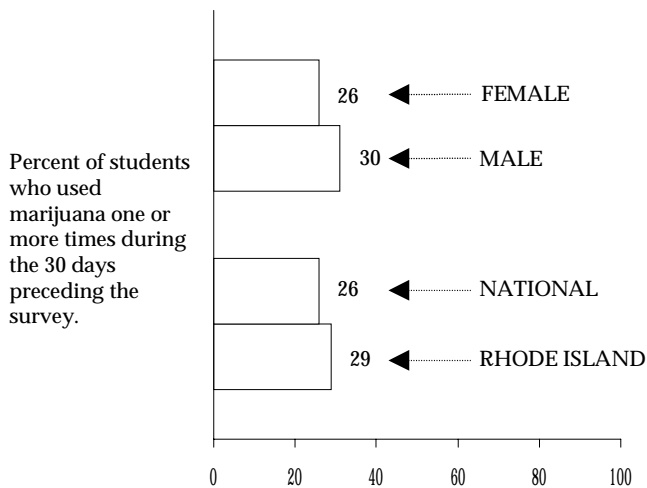
Rationale: Alcohol is a major contributing factor in approximately half of all homicides, suicides, and motor vehicle crashes, which are the leading causes of death and disability among young people. Heavy drinking among youth has been linked conclusively to physical fights, destroyed property, academic and job problems, and trouble with law enforcement authorities.



Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Risk Behavior: Other drug use

Rationale: In addition to morbidity and mortality due to injury, drug abuse is related to early unwanted pregnancy, school failure, delinquency, and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases (STD), including human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection. Despite improvements in recent years, illicit drug use is greater among high school students and other young adults in America than has been documented in any other industrialized nation in the world.



Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Risk Behavior: Age of initiation, life time use, and use on school property

Drugs, Alcohol and Crime: The number of Rhode Island juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations in 1997 was the highest recorded total since 1977. Drug and alcohol offenses referred to Family Court increased 54% between 1994 and 1997, from 691 offenses in 1994 to 1,061 offenses in 1997. Minors in possession of alcohol increased 31% between 1996 and 1997. Ninety percent of the incarcerated population at the Training School had been regular abusers of illicit substances and alcohol. (Source: 1998 Rhode Island Kids Count Factbook)

